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Military Children's Health Month

Bettering the Well-Being of Our Youngest Members

By **BERNARD S. LITTLE**

WRNMMC Public Affairs staff writer

Celebrated as Month of the Military Child, April is also Military Children's Health Month, focusing on bettering the physical and emotional well-being of the more than 2 million military children (ranging in ages from newborn to 18 years old) in the United States and overseas.

There are almost as many active-duty-member children as there are adults on active duty, according to Military OneSource (www.militaryonesource.mil), which serves as the central hub and go-to-place for the military community, providing answers to many questions concerning military life.

"It's important to recognize the unique challenges and accomplishments of our military families, particularly after the past 13 years of multiple deployments and conflict," said Army Col. (Dr.) Margret Merino, department chief of pediatrics at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC).

"In the military, we are responsible for many valuable and important things, but [nothing] is as important to a service member as their child," Merino continued. "That is why it is such an honor to be a military pediatrician. Military children are actually an important part of the future military force as well. Many children of military parents go on to join the military themselves."

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and American Heart Association (AHA), one in five U.S. children over age 5 has unhealthy cholesterol, and one in three is either overweight or obese.

"These numbers are concerning because we know that these health problems don't just impact the child now, but set children up for health problems in the future as adults," Merino said.

Unhealthy cholesterol and obesity in children can lead to an increased risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and stroke as they reach adulthood, according to the CDC and AHA.

"Implementing healthy habits early and giving children knowledge and tools on how to improve their health and maintain a healthy body weight is a top priority for pediatric physicians," Merino said.

She added one of the most important things parents and adults can do for children is to be a role model.

Merino shared some ways for parents to ensure their



PHOTO BY BERNARD S. LITTLE

The Arndt family takes time to play with a wooden bead maze in the Walter Reed National Medical Center's pediatric hematology and oncology unit.

children develop good habits that will help them lead a more healthy life.

"Healthy diet and exercise promotes good habits," Merino explained. "Not smoking is important. Setting aside time for meals and striving to have healthy meals regularly. It's not always easy, especially with single or working parents."

A study in the journal *Pediatrics* showed that children and adolescents who share family meals three or more times per week are more likely to be in a normal weight range and have healthier dietary and eating patterns than those who share fewer than three family meals together per week.

"Some of the most important things you can do don't take a lot of resources, just time," Merino continued. "For children, even when they are very young, reading to [them] is so important to social and language development."

In addition to healthy eating, the CDC stresses that

physical activity is important to lowering the risk of becoming obese and developing related diseases. The AHA recommends providing children plenty of vegetables, fruits and whole-grain products, while limiting sugars. In addition, the AHA encourages diets including low-fat or nonfat milk or dairy products, lean meats, poultry, fish, lentils and beans for protein. Also, encourage all family members to drink lots of water.

In combination with healthy eating, physical activity helps reduce the risk of chronic diseases and obesity, health officials say. The AHA encourages children and adolescents to participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day.

Another factor in healthy living is sleep.

"Sleep is very important for healthy development, optimal school performance and overall well-being," Merino added. "In adolescence, sleep disorders can

Celebrating Earth Week – An Opportunity, Privilege and Responsibility

This week, we celebrate a special occasion that every one of us is a part of – Earth Week.

Previously, Earth Day was celebrated every year on April 22. This year marks the 46th year that Earth Day has been celebrated on Naval Support Activity Bethesda – which formerly, was the campus of the National Naval Medical Center.

The Navy realized that one day isn't enough to give our Earth the attention it deserves, and so we celebrate Earth Week in order to dedicate ourselves to educating, conducting outreach, making a positive and proactive difference and celebrating our planet. Earth Week is observed April 18 – 22 this year.

It is important that we actively acknowledge and participate in this event. Why? Simply because we are all affected by the health (or lack thereof) of Mother Earth.

I say this frequently — here at NSAB and with our mission partners and tenants, we are all one big family working together. Nowhere is that more apparent and appropriate than in our status as Earthlings. Despite our nationalities, allegiances, religion, political ideas or personal beliefs, we are all human – and we only have one Earth to share.

As the Naval Support Activity Bethesda community, we are fortunate to have a safe environment. We have clean water, clean air and we are not threatened by an unstable or heavily polluted location. But such places do exist in the world. Yes, we are privileged to have a safe environment, but



Capt. Marvin L. Jones
NSAB Commanding Officer

we can't take it for granted. If we do, we too one day may find ourselves in unhealthy and unsafe circumstances.

This week, NSAB and our partner and tenant commands have joined together to learn about our planet via a speakers' forum held at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center's Clark Auditorium. NASA and Office of Naval Research scientists taught us and inspired us with their knowledge of earth science research, ocean study and geology and mineral resources here in Maryland.

We also held an Environmental Vendor's Fair in order to inform our community how we proactively conduct recycling and environmental outreach, including an NSAB Environmental booth, at which our Environmental professionals informed and educated us on how they maintain and preserve our environment both on and off campus. Representatives from local water and power companies also shared information

on how to use renewable energy and conserve power.

A base cleanup event was conducted earlier this week. We came together as a community to take responsibility for our shared environment and took action to preserve and protect it. I want to personally thank everyone who got involved – your selfless dedication is a fine example for all to follow.

We are also investing in our future, planting trees this week to both literally preserve our environment and to demonstrate how we plant roots and work as a team. We care tremendously about our planet and this simple act of tree planting shows our commitment to our community and to the Earth. The Navy's and NSAB's mission includes making the campus more sustainable environmentally and ultimately supporting our partner and tenant commands while conserving our natural resources. NSAB promotes environmental stewardship opportunities, including an Energy Fair and symposiums to educate our workforce, residents and guests on actions they can perform every day to save energy.

The effort to sustain our environment is a big one and requires all of us to get engaged in this critical team effort. Nothing less than the future of our planet – our only home – is at stake. One week a year is a start, but the reality is that each of us needs to do our part every day to preserve our common environment – the Earth – and help it not just to survive, but to thrive.

The Earth is counting on us. Let's all do our part – this week, and every week.

Bethesda Notebook

Sexual Assault Awareness

In observance of Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month, there will be a lunch and learn session from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Memorial Auditorium at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. Everyone is invited to attend. Other events scheduled include a two-day Rape Aggression Defense Workshop on April 22-23 (registration is required), Denim Day on April 27, and an Empowerment Relay on April 30 from 8 to 11:30 a.m. For more information about events, contact Kim Agnew, Monique Greene or Rosemary Galvan at 301-442-2053.

Children Coping With Separation/Divorce

Elisabet Martinez, a licensed clinical social worker at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, will present the program "Caught in the Middle: Strategies to Help Children Cope with Parental Separation/Divorce," on April 28 at 11:30 a.m. in the USO Building (64). Topics for the presentation include identifying how children respond to separation/divorce, techniques to help children cope with their feelings, and recognizing how parent's interaction with one another impacts how children react. Those interested in attending the forum should register with Elisabet Martinez at 301-400-2406, or email elisabet.martinez2.civ@mail.mil.

Take Your Daughters, Sons to Work

Walter Reed National Military Medical Center hosts its 5th Annual Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day April 28. Those interested in participating are encouraged to register at <https://www.research.net/r/WRNMMC2016b>, or in Memorial Auditorium from 7:15 to 8 a.m. on the day of the event.

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Earth Week Begins!

By MC2 HANK GETTYS
NSAB Public Affairs staff writer

Earth Week kicks off at Naval Support Activity Bethesda (NSAB) with a forum in Walter Reed National Military Medical Center's Clark Auditorium April 19.

The event began with some words on this important week from NSAB Commanding Officer Navy Capt. Marvin L. Jones.

"Today, as we celebrate the 46th Earth Week, we're provided with a great opportunity to learn more about our world and how we can better take care of it," said Jones. "Throughout the Navy, both here in the U.S. and around the world, on ships at sea and on our bases in foreign countries, Earth Week is being celebrated to commemorate and remind us of our commitment to protect the environment."

The forum, led by representatives from NASA and a retired naval officer, raised awareness of the quantifiable effects that humans have had upon the Earth.

The speakers were:

- Dr. James Iron, deputy director of the Earth Sciences Division at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC)
- Dr. Carlos Del Castillo, chief of the Ocean Ecology Laboratory at NASA GSFC
- Retired Navy Cmdr. David Fryauff, former deputy head of the Military Malaria Vaccine Program.

The Earth Week celebrations continued throughout the week, highlighted by a base-wide cleanup April 20 and a tree-planting ceremony April 21.

As Jones said, "we all share in the responsibility of being involved and making a difference." Join us for the remaining events planned for this week.

For more information on Earth Week events, check the NSAB facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/NSABethesda/>.



PHOTO BY MC2 HANK GETTYS

Dr. James Iron, deputy director of the Earth Sciences Division at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, helps Naval Support Activity Bethesda (NSAB) kick off Earth Week by speaking in a forum in Walter Reed National Military Medical Center's Clark Auditorium April 19.

FFSC Holds 5th Annual Youth Health and Fitness Fair

By MCSN WILLIAM PHILLIPS
NSAB Public Affairs staff writer

In recognition of Month of the Military Child, Naval Support Activity Bethesda (NSAB) is holding several events for military children and their families.

NSAB's Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) held their 5th annual Youth Health and Fitness Fair April 16.

"We have a health and fitness fair with 23 vendors ranging from the Traumatic Brain Injury Clinic to NSAB crime prevention," said Carren Francis, a life skills educator with FFSC.

The Youth Health and Fitness Fair was also a way for parents to get information while their children had fun.

"It is an informational fair," said Francis. "The parents get to go around and get information from the vendors, and the kids will do an activity at each table. The kids will then get their passports stamped once they completed their activity and they will turn them in for a prize at the end of the fair."

At the end of the fair, FFSC raffled off prizes like fitness gifts bags and bikes, said Francis.

"We just want to honor some of the sacrifices that our families are making as the parents are serving in the military," said Ursula Rocha, a new parent



PHOTO BY MCSN WILLIAM PHILLIPS

Naval Support Activity Bethesda's Fleet and Family Support Center held the 5th annual Youth Health and Fitness Fair April 16.

NSAB Strikes Out Sexual Assault

PHOTOS BY MCSN WILLIAM PHILLIPS

Naval Support Activity Bethesda's (NSAB) Fleet and Family Support Center Sexual Assault Prevention and Response team held a Strikeout event at the Bowling Center on NSAB April 19. The event was part of a series of events held in April in observance of Sexual Assault Awareness Prevention Month on NSAB.



WRNMMC Town Hall: Leaders Discuss Strategic Plan, Construction

BY BERNARD S. LITTLE
Wrnmhc Public Affairs staff writer

Rear Adm. (Dr.) David A. Lane hosted two town hall meetings on April 12 at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC), focusing on the future of the nation's flagship military treatment facility.

In addition to Lane, speakers at the town hall discussed ongoing construction upgrades at WRNMMC, which could last for about a decade, but once completed ensure it remains the nation's premier military medical center.

Lane, who became WRNMMC's director Feb. 1, explained the medical center's Strategic Plan is approximately two years old. The Strategic Plan sets its priorities, focuses its energy and resources, strengthens operations, ensures employees and other stakeholders are working toward common goals, intended outcomes and results while assessing and adjusting the organization's direction in response to a changing environment.

"The Strategic Plan is meant to be a living document," Lane said. "The constraints, restraints, [and] the planning factors that were used to come up with that plan have changed. The Defense Health Agency has been created; the Military Health System is operating under new paradigms; and we're going to have a new administration coming [into office] in January. It's a good time to take a look at what we're doing and ask ourselves, 'Are we heading in the right direction?' 'Where

do we see Walter Reed National Military Medical Center being in a decade, or 15 years from now?' 'What is your vision for what's the best that we can be?'"

The director said WRNMMC Organization Development team has given employees and other stakeholders in the medical center community opportunities to voice their input towards updating the Strategic Plan. Lane added he would like more feedback from staff members regarding their concerns and he is exploring ways they might be able to do that via text messages and other avenues.

Along similar lines, Lane said the medical center has received results back from the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute regarding the Command Climate Survey WRNMMC employees were asked to participate in during the latter part of February into March. He explained the "climate assessment is a systematic procedure that gathers organizational data to provide insight of how an organization is functioning to meet its mission. It provides a 'snapshot' of key factors as perceived by its members as it relates to demographics and key data." Employees were able to share their sentiments concerning their workplace environment by participating in the survey. About 34 percent of WRNMMC's more than 7,000-member

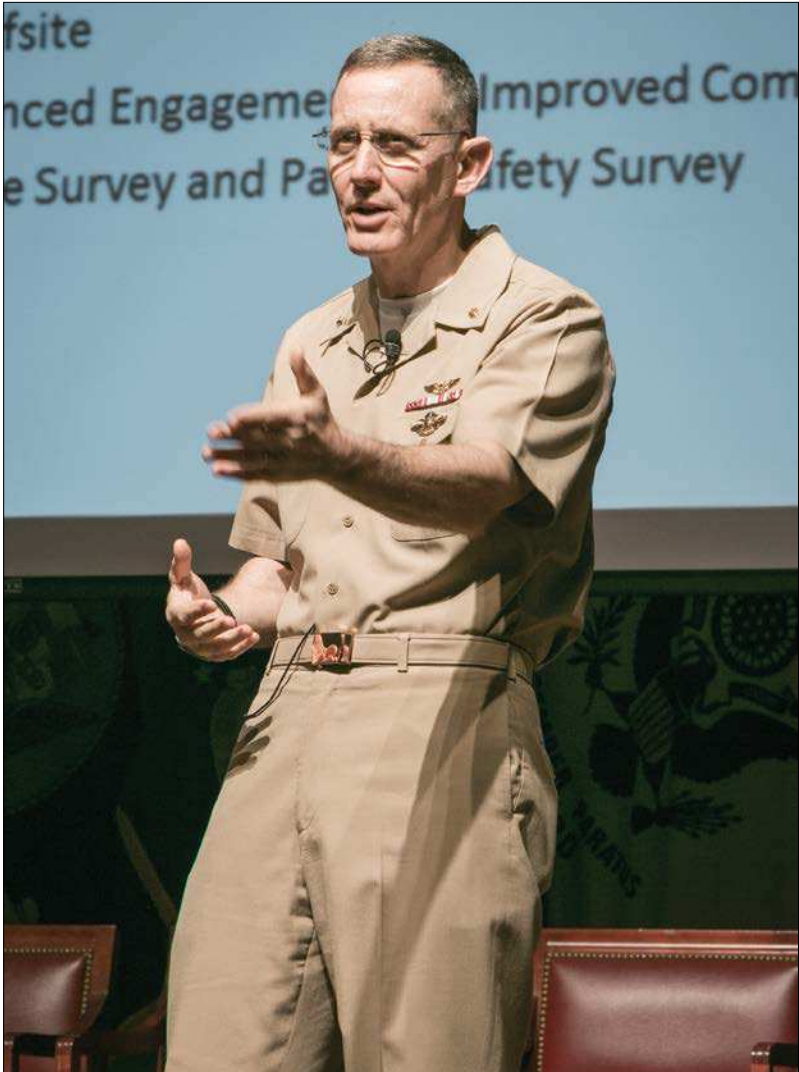


PHOTO BY HARVEY DUZE

Rear Adm. (Dr.) David A. Lane, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center director, discusses his plans to update the medical center's Strategic Plan and improve staff communication during town hall meetings April 12.

See WRNMMC page 9

NSAB Holds Character Brunch

PHOTOS BY AIRMAN MATTHEW HOBSON

Naval Support Activity Bethesda's Morale Welfare and Recreation hosted a Character Brunch in celebration of Month of the Military Child at the Warrior Cafe April 16. Families and children interacted and took photos with many of their favorite animation characters while enjoying brunch.



Red Cross Volunteer Marks 73 Years of Service

By **ANDREW DAMSTEDT**
NSAB Public Affairs staff writer

In 1943, Big Bands were topping the music charts, the United States was embroiled in World War II and Mary Bochanis started volunteering for the American Red Cross at the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC).

Now, 73 years later, at age 91, Bochanis still brings a smile to those she serves as she pushes the comfort cart down Walter Reed National Military Medical Center's (WRNMMC) halls.

"It was just something that I knew I had to do," Bochanis said. "I can't imagine anyone staying at home and not doing anything."

She said everyone was volunteering to help the war effort while she was studying at George Washington University pursuing a degree in merchandising.

"Everyone was volunteering; my mother was wrapping bandages," Bochanis said. "There just wasn't a soul that wasn't doing something. We had to; we had to do it."

She met her husband, Charles 'Gus' Bochanis, while he was recovering from injuries sustained during World War II, including an amputated leg.

"I was kidding my husband that the reason I dated him was because he was on crutches," Bochanis said. "We never stood in a line, we never picked up a check, we went to the movies and we just walked right in. It had a lot of perks."

But she said she wishes that her husband, who died in 2006, could see the technological improvements that have been made for amputees in the past 10 years.

"My husband had to wear straps and I can't begin to tell you the stuff to hold up the prostheses," she said. "Today you put it on. I wish he was here to see it. Every Saturday I had to wash the stump socks."

While there are more than 600 volunteers for the Red Cross at NSAB, Bochanis is one of three who are older than 90 years old. Bernie Glassman, 95, volunteers in outpatient physical therapy and Lina Czubas, 92, volunteers in the pharmacy.

"And they're not sitting at a desk," said Mary Leggit, American Red Cross Bethesda volunteer chair.

Leggit said Bochanis has a way of making people know they're important to her.

"She is just a joy," Leggit said. "She comes in with a smile and she leaves with a smile ... it's something about her touch, she touches people, I mean physically she will put her hands on people and give them a warm squeeze or a hug. She's just a warm person."

Bochanis, a self-described hugger, said she will settle on shaking hands if they don't want a hug.

Leggit said the medical center staff looks forward to seeing her each week as she makes the rounds with the comfort cart. Bochanis said she enjoys giving away the supplies on the comfort cart, where she said she is especially adept at giving away Girl Scout cookies.

"It's a wonderful service, sometimes people come here and they don't have anything like toothpaste or toothbrushes, we carry all of that," she said. "You name it, we got it and if we don't, we'll go out and buy it."

In addition to her volunteer work for the American Red Cross, Bochanis volunteers one day a week at the National Institutes of Health Children's Inn and has volunteered with her church,

St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Washington, for several years.

Bochanis continues to volunteer because she likes the camaraderie and enjoys meeting people. She recounted a recent encounter with a 3-year-old girl who was trying to blow bubbles in a room in the pediatrics department.

"She couldn't do it, so I spent 10 minutes with her blowing bubbles," Bochanis said. "I thought it was so special that I was able to do that for her. She seemed to enjoy it."

She said she feels a special connection to the spouses of amputees, having been one herself so she'll tell them of her own experiences.

"Living with an amputee, it's different," she said. "You have to be really aware of the injuries and the psychological part."

Hospital Corpsman Third Class Diandra Thompson, who volunteers with the Red Cross, said working with Bochanis has been a pleasure and that everyone looks forward to Thursdays when Bochanis takes around the comfort cart.

"They love her, especially the kids — they love her so much," Thompson said.

She said Bochanis is someone she wants to emulate.

"She's so young for her age," Thompson said. "She always makes me smile. Even if you're sad, she always makes you smile."

Bochanis said she plans on volunteering as long as she can.

"We just hope Mary is going to volunteer forever," said Joan Goldberg, American Red Cross volunteer. "When she can't drive, I'm picking her up."



Surgeon Recognized for Work with Joint Trauma System

By JOE NIEVES
WRNMMC Public
Affairs staff writer

Air Force Col. (Dr.) Jeffrey A. Bailey, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) director of surgery and a professor of surgery at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU), will be honored as a Hero of Military Medicine (HMM) for his contributions to the Department of Defense's (DoD) Joint Trauma System (JTS) during the 2016 Heroes Dinner in Washington, D.C. on May 5.

"[HMM] honors outstanding contributions of individuals who have distinguished themselves through excellence and selfless dedication to advancing military medicine and enhancing the lives and health of our nation's wounded, ill and injured service members, veterans and their families," according to the Center for Public-Private Partnerships of the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, sponsor of the HMM Awards.

Honorees are chosen by the HMM Advisory Committee comprised primarily of former surgeons general.

"I am motivated to continue my service as a military surgeon because of the everyday opportunity to make a difference where it really counts," Bailey said.

In 2015, he was assigned as director for surgery at WRNMMC and as a professor in the Department of Surgery in USU, where he is responsible for the operation and direction of all aspects of subspecialty and perioperative surgical care, education, research and readiness for the Surgical Directorate. Prior to that, he served as the U.S. Central Command Joint Theater Trauma System director twice.

Bailey enlisted in the Air Force in 1976 and was trained as a medical laboratory specialist. In 1980, he went to the Air Force Physician Assistant School, graduated from the University of Oklahoma and was commissioned in 1982.

He served as a physician assistant for eight years before attending medical school with assistance from the Health Professions Scholarship Program. He graduated from Saint Louis University in St. Louis, Mo., with a Doctor of Medicine in 1996. He also completed his surgical residency and trauma critical care fellowship training at Saint Louis University.

"I grew up a child of the generation that fought the Second World War before the Air Force was born," Bailey explained. "I had neighbors



COURTESY PHOTO

Air Force Col. (Dr.) Jeffrey A. Bailey, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center's director of surgery, poses for a photo during a deployment as the director of the Department of Defense's Joint Trauma System.

who served in the Army Air Corps who shared their stories and medals with me. I think of that group of people who fought the war [and served their nation]; they passed that [dedication and commitment] onto me. The Air Force changed my life."

Some of Bailey's accomplishments came from his passion and dedication to being on the front-line of care. He deployed twice in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom as chief of trauma at the Air Force Theater Hospital on Balad Air Base in 2006 and 2007. He also deployed to the Combined Joint Operational Area of Central Command in 2010 to serve as the Joint Theater Trauma System (JTTS) director during which he operationalized a system to capture clinical data from point of injury evacuations into a Tactical Evacuation registry.

In 2011, Bailey served as director

of the JTS and its DoD Trauma Registry at Joint Base San Antonio, Texas, where he led the JTS to the designation as a Defense Center of Excellence and oversaw the realignment of the Committee on Tactical Combat Casualty Care) from the Defense Health Board to the JTS. In 2013 he deployed again as the U.S. Central Command JTTS director and implemented the Pre-Hospital Trauma Registry across the expeditionary trauma system.

Recently, Bailey was also one of the recipients of the Military Health System 2015 Battlefield Innovation Award at the Federal Health 2015 Conference hosted by the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States and The Society of Federal Health Professionals in San Antonio. That award citation stated, "It is through the JTS and its history of leadership and passionate commitment to combat

care that case fatality rates for combat injury in Afghanistan and Iraq dropped to less than half of Vietnam and one-third of World War II."

"The advancements made in trauma and combat casualty care during the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have, in large part, resulted from the continuous JTS operational cycle of data collection, data analysis, and resultant formulation and adaptation of best evidence-based practice guidelines," Bailey stated. He added his service with the JTS and US Central Command Joint Theater Trauma System has been his most proudest to date.

Bailey said he will continue to contribute to the JTS and "support and advance the JTS to actualize its full potential as a lead agent for trauma systems and trauma care in DoD.

Cancer Knows No Age Limit: Young Adults and Their Challenges

By **SHARON RENEE TAYLOR**
WRNMMC Public
Affairs staff writer

Prom, graduation, college, career, marriage and parenthood. This is the path some young people expect their lives to follow. What happens when an unforgiving disease, like cancer, interrupts it all?

Nearly a hundred young patients between the ages of 15 and 39 are diagnosed or receive care at the Murtha Cancer Center at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC).

Active Duty

Army Capt. Joshua Minton never had a bucket list. Instead, the West Point graduate had the perfect 20-year plan: graduate from the captain career course at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, move to the next level of leadership, get married, have two or three kids, save money for retirement and determine where to spend the rest of his days.

Back pain sent the field artillery officer to the ER in 2014, which led to blood tests and a biopsy—it was cancer.

“Neuroendocrine cancer,” Minton said, explaining the malignancy uses the hormone system to spread

around the body. “It got in my lymph nodes and it’s all over: I’ve got it in the neck, behind the esophagus... along the spine. I just got these lymph nodes with tumors all over the place.”

He was 27 years old at the time.

He chose WRNMMC—seven hours away from his native Ohio—to provide treatment for his incurable cancer. “I’m really glad I came here,” Minton said, two years after his diagnosis.

Minton also chose fertility preservation, as some young adults between the ages of 15 and 39 diagnosed with cancer elect to do.

“I’m about half the age of a normal person who would get [this type of cancer],” Minton said. “It’s sort of a weird age group, where everyone sees the children get children-specific cancer, and then everyone else, [they] don’t get cancer until [they’re] 50 or 60.”

Minton said it was weird to have to rely on others all of sudden. It’s been 10 years since he lived at home with his mom and dad.

“You may have some best friends when you first find out you have cancer and then, they don’t know how to [relate to you.] That’s another thing about this age group, not just

for you but for your peers who don’t have cancer, they’re not used to having people their age get cancer,” he added.

After five months of chemo, oncologist Navy Lt. Cmdr. (Dr.) Corey Carter placed the Soldier on a clinical trial for the past 36 weeks. Minton takes CT scans every six weeks to determine the status of the cancer.

He said he lives in limbo after a scan, every other week. He tried to get through the first six months of his diagnosis alone. Minton tried to be independent just like other service members, he said. He found it hard to ask for help or accept it.

Without a lot of visible side effects, the Soldier explained, cancer could sometimes be considered a hidden illness.

“Look at me. Do I look like I have cancer?” he asked, taking off his baseball cap and running his fingers through his full head of hair.

Minton has started to establish his identity again—what he’ll do after he medically retires, where to live, what to do. His cancer is terminal. There’s no longer a 20-year plan.

“As a cancer patient, I’ve got something that’s going to slowly kill me,” Minton said. “It’s going to kill me in a week or 20 years.”

Since his diagnosis, Minton has found a lot of opportunities to have fun. Faith came back to his life at the right time, he prays more.

“So it’s managing your expectations and taking advantage of the good days,” he said.

Beneficiary

When asked for a photo, 16-year-old Mikayla Atkins answers, “With hair or without?”

She wore a wig briefly before she determined it made her too hot. Next was the scarf, but the scarf captured so much attention and questions at school that she decided to go without.

Mikayla was 13 when she was first diagnosed and treated for ovarian cancer. The daughter of two military retirees and the big sister to a little brother, she endured surgery, six rounds of chemotherapy along with radiation.

That was the first time.

The mass started growing again. Oncologists at WRNMMC administered three more rounds of a different chemotherapy, this time at a higher dose intended to wipe out everything in her immune system before a stem cell transplant at a neighboring children’s hospital, where she stayed in the bone marrow unit.

Reaching Day-46 post-transplant, she is currently recovering at home.

There aren’t many visitors, but when there are some, they must leave their shoes at the door and cover their mouths with masks to see her. If she goes out, she wears a mask.

“I don’t like to go outside,” Mikayla said.

She anticipates the day when the recovery process is over. At the 100-day mark she hopes to begin school again. She’s missed a lot of school.

She estimates experiencing more than 20 inpatient stays since her diagnosis in 2013. She’s tried homeschooling but prefers to attend class.

Despite her lengthy absence, Mikayla will return to the 11th grade with her peers. Moving around as a military brat attending different schools, she started school at an earlier age, advancing ahead of them.

She had more friends before her family moved to Maryland. She said at times she likes to keep to herself other times she’s the life of the party.

Her two best friends, Shykiera and Carlisha, are back in Alabama. Mikayla and her friends email, text and speak to each other on the phone.

“They call to check up on me,” she said.

She said she felt lonely when her mother died of colon cancer in 2015. Mikayla and her mother were diagnosed with cancer within months of each other. The two comforted one another. The pediatric oncology nurses at WRNMMC were sensitive to Mikayla’s loss, and provided comfort.

“My dad says I keep it inside, I don’t talk about it,” Mikayla said.

Reflecting on the past few years, her father shared his thoughts.

“There’s definitely a lot going on,” said retired Army Staff Sgt. Marcus Atkins. “It’s been a rough lifestyle for all of us.”

These days, she has fun in the kitchen. She loves to bake and cook food, specializing in cakes and cupcakes.

“I think they taste great!” Mikayla proclaimed.

However, she does have a fear that the cancer may return for a third time. “It came back so suddenly,” Mikayla said about the first recurrence.

Her advice to other young adults with cancer, “You gotta get back up.”

Young adult cancer patients at WRNMMC meet together for a support group with two social workers every other month. Parents, spouses, and other loved ones are welcome to attend. For more information about the group, email Meghan Fitzgibbons at Meghan.K.Fitzgibbons.ctr@health.mil.

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FAIR

Continued from pg. 3

support nurse with FFSC.

FFSC thought it was important to put an emphasis on the health of the service member's family.

"Being a military treatment facility, we thought it was very important to focus on the health of our families since that's what we primarily do here at NSAB," said Rocha. "We thought focusing on their health and building resiliency among our families was really important."

There are many benefits offered to service members, and sometimes it can be difficult to keep up with all of them.

"We just really encourage our families to come to these events to learn what services are available to them," said Rocha. "Sometimes there are so many things available that it's very hard to keep track of all the options they have available to them."

Attending events like this can help service members and their families foster new relationships.

"It also helps them build connections with other family members, which may be difficult at this specific location because they are not living on base," said Rocha. "We want them to be able to build a support network so they can have someone to lean on during the difficult things they may face while they are serving."



PHOTO BY MCSN WILLIAM PHILLIPS

The 5th annual Youth Health and Fitness Fair promoted healthy children and allowed parents to get information to keep their children healthy.

WRNMMC

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workforce participated in the survey. A Command Assessment Team (CAT) of service members and civilian employees are currently analyzing the data.

"My pledge to you is we're going to give you feedback as soon as we can about each phase of this process," Lane said. He added the CAT, about 30 members including service members and civilians, "will do the work, finding out what it is [respondents] said on the Command Climate Survey. In the spirit of stewardship and ownership, we're going to come back to [staff members] and ask for participation in focus groups to develop an action plan [for possible changes]."

Lane added that in future town halls and other forums he wants more feedback from staff and other stakeholders. "I want to reach a larger share of our 7,000-member workforce, [and] make it less talking to you, but communicating with you. We're looking for more ways to have a strategic dialogue with our workforce."

Also during the town halls, Navy Lt. Cmdr. Gregg Benton, chief of Facilities Management at WRNMMC, explained some of the construction projects impacting the medical center, its staff and beneficiaries. Projects include construction of covered walkways outside of Bldg. 19, and an ADA-compliant pathway between the NEX gas station and Bldg. 10. In addition, plans call for putting a green top coating on the half-mile track in front of the Tower (Bldg. 1), and the Bldg. 10 window replacement project is ongoing. The Bldg. 10 pediatric playroom and Bldg. 9 oral maxillofacial surgery facility renovations are ongoing as well, along with the Bldg. 9 skylight replacement project.

Benton added the escalators in Bldg. 9 between the first and second floors will be out of service during construction in mid-May until late June. Also in May, the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit is scheduled to move within the hospital.

Beginning May 1, Brown Drive will be closed for about a year and a half for construction on the hospital utility tunnel project. Drivers will still be able to enter and exit the parking garages (Bldgs. 54 and 55) from the north and south ends of Brown

Drive, but there will be no thru traffic (vehicle or pedestrian) on Brown Drive between South Palmer Road and North Palmer Road during the closure, Benton explained. Signage will be posted to direct drivers and pedestrians to accessible alternative routes, he added.

"We will never shut down a parking garage for an extending period of time," Benton said.

Army Col. Michael Heimall, WRNMMC chief of staff, urged everyone to use caution transiting on base with the increased construction. "When we put barriers up

and we close off sidewalks, that doesn't mean walk in the streets. That's not safe. At dusk, it's hard [for drivers] to see people."

He also urged people to follow the posted speed limit (15 miles per hour) on base as well.

"Part of ownership is paying attention to those things and following the rules," Heimall said. "Part of ownership is gently, pleasantly and kindly reminding your shipmates, not to walk in the middle of the street because we care about them and we don't want them to get hurt."

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HEALTH

Continued from pg. 1

contribute to anxiety and depression. Having a set bedtime routine can help a lot. With young children, something like bath, PJs, brush teeth, story and bed, can work well. Avoiding screens — TV or tablets — in the bedroom and right before bed is very important,” she said.

Immunizations are also essential to good health, Merino continued. “Immunizations are one of the most important things we can do to help our children stay healthy,” she stated. “Nobody wants to give a child shot, but in the end, any risks and pain involved in immunization are much less than the terrible diseases that they very effectively prevent.”

While viral illnesses, sleep and behavioral concerns, as well as feeding problems are concerns pediatricians frequently address in younger children, in older children and adolescents, common issues include sports injuries, stress, and sleep problems. She encourages parents and adults to provide their children the proper head gear, eye wear and other equipment for the sports or recreational activity in which they participate in and make sure they use that gear. Children, adolescents and teens should get between eight to 10 hours of uninterrupted sleep each night.



Children of military members face unique challenges such as frequent moves, intermittent separation from parents and increased concern for parents if they are deployed to dangerous regions anywhere in the world.

Military children need to be resilient, said Barbara A. Thompson, the director of Department of Defense's Office of Family Readiness Policy. Active-duty military personnel move an average of once every two to three years, according to DoD statistics.

“Certainly frequent moves can be stressful, but taking advantage of the military's resources to help children prepare as much in advance for a

move may help to alleviate some of the anxiety with moving,” Merino said.

“It's not uncommon for children to have increased school and behavioral problems when a parent is deployed, so taking advantage of counseling services can be helpful so that there is an outside person to talk to,” Merino continued.

As difficult as being separated can be, the reunion can also have its challenges.

“Just like it's important to help deployed service members reintegrate into the family after returning from a deployment, it is important to help the child readjust as well,” Merino added. “Things don't always just

go back to normal, especially if the deployment was particularly difficult or if the service member was injured. It's a process and families need time to reintegrate with one another.”

Thompson stresses that everyone is a part of the family readiness system. Chaplains, teachers, child care givers, family advocacy specialists are all part of the support system for children and their parents, she said.

It's vital for families to know the resources around them to help through any challenge they encounter to ensure their family is healthy in all ways. Listed below are a few:

Military Kids Connect, a Department of Defense initiative formed by the National Center for Telehealth and Technology in 2010, is an online resource for military children between the ages of 6 to 17 providing access to age-appropriate resources to support children dealing with the unique psychological challenges of military life. The site is located at <http://militarykidsconnect.dcoe.mil/>.

Information concerning children's health is also available on the MHS and DHA website at <http://www.health.mil/Military-Health-Topics/Operation-Live-Well/Preventive-Health/Childrens-Health>

The Military OneSource website (<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/>), offers answers to the military life questions including health and wellness.



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